

“Once Upon a Time...”

Once upon a time, there was a big bad ugly wolf who —

“Wait, are you talking about me?” interrupted the wolf, looking surprised as he looked around the audience, raising an eyebrow. “That is *not* very nice. There are so many people here!”

The universe sighed, writing swirled across the sky like ink in water, the letters hanging in midair, as if waiting to be spoken.

“Aww, come on my sweeetiepieee, that’s how the story goes,” the universe cooed with an overly sugar-coated voice.

The wolf turned his head away from the audience, clearly feeling uncomfortable with the over sugary voice, paws scraping the concrete floor, making a sound that cut through the air with a sharp, grating screech, like nails dragged painfully across a chalkboard.

The universe cringed, “Can you stop making that noise please? It’s really anno —

“OKAY I GOT IT ALL RIGHT? That is not very nice, PLUS, THE AUDIENCE ARE WATCHING” The wolf took a deep breath, then continued in a calm yet firm tone “Let's not embarrass ourselves in front of these fine ladies and gentlemen please. I wasn’t evil at all; I got blamed under all the stereotypes.”

The universe remained silent, but the letters wobbled uncertainly, then rearranged themselves.

Once upon a time, there was a misunderstood wolf who —

The wolf smiled.

“Much better.”

The words settled into place.

The story changed.

Once upon a time, there was a misunderstood wolf who huffed, and he puffed, and “whoosh!”, the poor pig’s house collap —

“Seriously?! I just knocked on those little three bacons- my bad, I mean ham- oops, little pigs’ door, the house was made of straw! It was already falling apart!”

“Oh, come on, my swee—”

“Listen, if you don’t tell our audience the truth behind these stories, I will tell them myself.”

The universe sighed. The wolf cleared his throat, straightened his posture, and then began his story:

“Definitely not *Once upon a time*; when I was still a little kid, Mr and Mrs Wolf ‘very accidentally’ abandoned me in the bush, Little Red’s grandma adopted me, and I always helped her with chores. Sometimes Grandma would joke about *how her adopted grandson was even more loving than her granddaughter Red* in front of her friends, I felt bad for Red, my *sister*, but she never seemed bothered. I kept myself quiet.”

The wolf suddenly choked. He looked away from the audience, eyes filling up with water, memories flashing back to his head:

The room smelt like warm butter with a mug of tea and the woody scent of burning logs mixed with the sweet smell of a Sunday’s sunshine. But then something changed, the room suddenly filled with coldness and a metallic smell. Hearing the faint sound of grandma’s screaming, seeing Red kneel beside her with a shiny object squeezed in her hand.

The wolf blinked it away, then continued:

“Alright, you know what happened, right? I know you will read my mind, obviously. Here’s the rest. After *that*, I moved out. I looked on a website called ‘FakeEstate’(p.s. not ‘RealEstate’, no judging, I didn’t have much money, just the red pockets from Chinese New Year) I came across a luxury house that was on sale for \$999, but when I went there, there was just a straw house with the FakeEstate agent pig. I suddenly realised they were scamming me, and then the straw house collapsed for no reason, so I told the pig agent that I was going to report this scam to the government. The three pigs somehow allied with Red, they contacted all the famous authors and bribed them with money to write two stories called *The Three Little Pigs* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. They gathered all their money and published it on every newspaper and brainwashed all the parents (including yours) to read it before bed to the kids.”

The wolf checked the time on his AppleWatch, “Oh! So sorry, I need to go now—I have a Zoom meeting for work, I now work in RealEstate. Anyway, if any of you guys want to hear more about the truth, feel free and always welcome! My email is wolfymissesgranny@realestate.com, byeee!”

The universe sighed, “We’re not leaving until you say, ‘thank you.’ to the audience! You know the rules.”

“THANK YOU SO MUCH my ladies and gentlemen!”

The wolf left.

The universe smiled.

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